

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A 23WASHINGTON POST
13 May 1987*J R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr.**A* Bill Casey's Reading . . .

NEW YORK—What will become of Bill Casey's books? At his mansion on Long Island, friends filed past his coffin and then into the enormous rooms lined with thousands of books stacked to the ceilings, perhaps 15 feet up. Casey lived in a library adorned with the mementos that be-token the life of a great public man.

But this former director of central intelligence, who died last week, was like no other public man today. In a remote corner of his enclosed porch looking out on Long Island Sound stands a card catalog made of wood and equal to those that might be found in a county library. Bill Casey was one of the most well-read men in modern American government. He was gruff and blunt, but he had an exquisite mind illuminated and ennobled by these walls of philosophy, literature, history, finance, economics and more. Now there will be books about him. He was a great man.

Crossing Paris' Pont Neuf several years ago, one of Britain's finest journalists, Frank Johnson, asked me why no American statesman today could match the sagacity and character of the magnificent generation that guided us through World War II. I told him we had one left, the man who had directed Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign, stocked the Reagan administration with most of its best young talent, rebuilt the CIA and sustained some of the administration's soundest policies—Bill Casey.

Casey saved his greatest feats for

late in life. His long career of public service extended from the confident premises and supreme deeds of World War II to our own days of mediocrity and uncertainty.

Casey recognized the deterioration. He knew that by answering Ronald Reagan's call he was placing at risk all the esteem that had accrued from a long and honorable life. He would not have been surprised that at his funeral mass in the presence of his grieving friends and family an obtuse Catholic prelate would rebuke him for adhering to the same values that saved the West from Nazism in the 1940s and have thwarted communism ever since.

Casey's was "the greatest U.S. intelligence career," according to William Safire, and generations of spooks from here and abroad paid Casey their respects. But dozens of other professions were represented too. The scope of Casey's interests was as vast as his library.

During World War II William Donovan, head of our fledgling intelligence service, spotted Casey's mix of strategic and tactical acumen and made him a global trouble-shooter. The two understood that in the struggle against aggressive totalitarianism, wars would henceforth be fought without battlefields or even declarations of war. The combatants would attempt to penetrate populations with agents of influence, disinformation, psychological manipulation and other forms of subversion.

After the war Casey made a for-

tune as a lawyer and venture capitalist. Then his zest for action lured him to politics—not to the campaigns of idiot jingles and blow-dried beauty but to the serious stuff. Suggestive of his depth was his lifelong participation in refugee relief. There are never many votes in that sort of work. Nor was there easy applause for aiding anti-communists in Afghanistan, Africa and Central America. Yet Casey persevered to protect American freedom and to ensure that in the years to come there would be fewer refugees.

Casey was criticized for poor relations with Congress, which was a disingenuous way of saying that he would not capitulate to legislative usurpation of foreign policy and to inferior minds. He defended the interests of the Western democracies today as he did in World War II. It is a fight that liberals and conservatives once shared.

With the rolling gait and cocky demeanor of a man half his age, he became Ronald Reagan's wisest adviser. Since cancer of the brain felled him in December, those who cannot face the totalitarian challenge have charged him with low deeds and violating the law in directing aid to the Nicaraguan freedom fighters. Casey was too bright a lawyer to break the law, even such a platypus of a law as the Boland Amendment. Just before he entered the hospital, we met in a crowded room. "I'm as clean as a hound's tooth," he growled. I wish he would growl at me just one more time. I didn't know the great man was dying.